THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

In This Number

Jean Starr Untermeyer, Anna Wickham, David Morton, Padraic Colum, George O'Neil

Conrad Aiken and Walter De La Mare Reviewed

$2.50 by the Year — Single Copies 25c
Published Monthly at 449 West 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.
Number 18 — August, 1922
Entered as second-class matter February 28, 1921, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

Contents

POEMS Page

Mater in Extremis. By Jean Starr Untermeyer 3
Rescue. By Jean Starr Untermeyer 4
New World. By Louise Townsend Nicholl 5
The Last Night. By David Osborne Hamilton 5
The Pursuit. By Henry Bellamann 6
More Than Sound. By Hazel Hall 8
Ephemera. By Hazel Hall 8
The Wooing. By Anna Wickham 9
Song of Ophelia the Survivor. By Anna Wickham 10
The Poor Girl's Meditation. By Padraic Colum 11
Faith. By Carolyn Hall 12
Carnival. By Prescott Hoard 12
Dream. By George O'Neil 13
To a Woman. By Kenneth Slade Alling 14
To One Playing Shubert. By David Morton 14

EDITORIAL

Prizes and the Long Poem. By Winifred Welles 15

IN REVIEW

Word-Craft. By Maxwell Anderson 16
A Poet for the Few. By Winifred Welles 17
Delicate Soil. By Louise Townsend Nicholl 18

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

Number 18 August, 1922

Mater in Extremis

I STAND between them and the outer winds,
But I am a crumbling wall.
They told me they could bear the blast alone.
They told me: that was all.
But I must wedge myself between
Them and the first snowfall.

Riddled am I by onslaughts and attacks
I thought I could forestall.
I reared and braced myself to shelter them
Before I heard them call.
I cry them, God, a better shield!
I am about to fall.

Rescue

WIND and wave and the swinging rope
Were calling me last night;
None to save and little hope,
No inner light.

Each snarling lash of the stormy sea
Curled like a hungry tongue.
One desperate splash—and no use to me
The noose that swung!

Death reached out three crooked claws
To still my clamoring pain.
I wheeled about, and Life's gray jaws
Grinned once again.

To sea I gazed, and then I turned
Stricken toward the shore,
Praying half-crazed to a moon that burned
Above your door.

And at your door you discovered me;
And at your heart I sobbed. . . .
And if there be more of eternity
Let me be robbed.

Let me be clipped of that heritage
And burned for ages through;
Freed and stripped of my fear and rage—
But not of you.

Jean Starr Untermeyer

New World

HALF-WAKED, I hurried down the stairs to say goodbye;
The imprints of my feet were faint, and almost lost,
In stillness lying on the early morning house
As fragile and as delicately rough as frost.

Outside were last night's lanterns in the windless trees,
Thin blue, unnatural green, and yellow like the fruit
You moved across the room slowly to touch and take.
We held each other, drowsy, close, surprised, and mute—

As if that other pendent paper globe, the earth,
Had gone out, too, last night, swayed softly, made an end,
And we had waked to morning in another world
Where there was no more need of speech to apprehend.

You went into the sun and may not be possessed
For long by that reality; but it will keep
The startling, half-forgotten clearness of a dream
For me, who went back through the frosted house to sleep.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

The Last Night

BECAUSE they lock the doors and hide the light
They think their tempting treasure safe, at least.
But we will smell out beauty through the night—
And all the rest will be a feast.

Then in the morning when they turn the locks
There will be no more beauty. Not a scrap!
The earth laid waste—a rifled cracker-box,
And we—two dead mice in a trap.

David Osborne Hamilton

The Pursuit

I KNOW you now—
I know you,
and there is fear in me—
fear like shaken waters,
flying waters,—
waves that come again, thunder broken,
from the deep.

Always I have come too late
upon the places where you moved,
and the leaves,
star shaped, and wing shaped,
agile, shuddering leaves
that closed upon your track
were like the flight
of most strange, ecstatic birds.

The light that crept again
along the purple furrow
of your flowing shadow
was like quick swimming gold
of mythic fishes, deep enchanted
by some intricate, thin singing—
singing lost and twisted
into whispering
that fled like swift refolding foam
from the sharp and delicate
slim curving wake
of your purple shadowed going.

Your flying, slight and pointed steps
upon the tall, quiescent, virginal, bent grasses—
your penetrant and pointed cruel steps
lay like gold edged arrows
in the silver virgin grasses.

Are you tigress?
Are you wingèd—
winged and arrow footed—
white sail swift and purple shadow silent?
Are you shape of wind and singing,—
thousand winged?
Are you fire and black striped,
arrow footed tigress?—
steel winged or desperate eagle?

I am too late
to perfectly surprise your sickle step;
but a fear is in the sinuous waters
of my heart's most secret pool
of guarded stillness.

I have seen them,
and I know you—
I have seen the faces passing—
scarred and slim, most frail swift faces—
those who held you,
those who knew you,—
arrowed, striped—and wingèd.

I must find you—
break some sudden curtain,
starred and sounding
of most slender, pale and swinging
white and silver willow leaves,—
break some willow curtain,
break and crumble the small shadows—
come like swift pursuit of sun upon you —
see you,
know you,—
wingèd, fire striped—and arrowed.

Henry Bellamann

More Than Sound

AFTER you have passed, the silence
Grown from your echoed tread,
Is like a flower that is unfolding
In my hands . . . Soft petals spread
Mistily across my fingers;
Dim leaves twine in cooling strands
About my wrists . . .
Your passing gives me
Quiet that fulfills my hands.

Ephemera

THERE is a woman who makes my eye
A place of shadows, as now and then
I see her dimly going by,
And faintly coming back again.

She moves as many others move;
There is no utterance in her tread
To tempt an echo, nor to prove
What other footsteps have not said.

As often as she comes and goes
She is forgotten, as now and then
The wind is forgotten until it blows
A blur of dust down the street again.

Hazel Hall

The Wooing

GOD keep one tryst with me—
Thou vast impersonal Love,
Then grant me liberty
To wait, to watch, to move.

In that blest hour, I'll breathe from thee
The freedom and the might
The high control, the dignity
To give all men their right.

Stay not too long lest I should fail
And crumble 'neath thy steady weight;
Now let my utmost prayer prevail,
Come not too late!

There is one peace that I should love:
Thine own humanity,
That I cannot, till thou shalt move
To work a change in me.

I have known conflict, shame and toil
I woo thee now with pain and deed
Long I have turned and turned the soil.
Fling thou the seed!

Song of Ophelia the Survivor

THERE is no smirch of sin in you,—only its fires
You are a man burned white with spiritual desires;
A restless heat consumes you, and your brain
Tortured to torturing, craves for ugly pain.

Beauty still lives in you and from her seat
Controls your glances and directs your feet;
One look from you taught me so much of Love
I have all pleasure, just to watch you move.

That look was like a wet blue mist of flowers,
Which held compelling loveliness and sleepy powers,
I dreamed of calling pipes down a warm glade
By the transposed music of your soul am I betrayed!

Pipe for me, my dear lover! I will come,
And your sick soul shall find in me a home;
I will be your house clean high and strong,
And you shall live in me, all winter long.

As you are fevered I will be a pool
Full of green shadows, level silent, cool
You shall bathe in me, in my being move
I will put out your fires with my strong love.

A thousand changes shall my love reveal
And all its changes shall have power to heal;
And in the end, we'll be as we began;
I will be simple woman, you my man.

Anna Wickham

The Poor Girl's Meditation

I AM sitting here,
Since the moon rose in the night;
Kindling a fire,
And striving to keep it alight:
The folk of the house are lying
In slumber deep;
The cocks will be crowing soon:
The whole of the land is asleep.

May I never leave this world
Until my ill-luck is gone;
Till I have cows and sheep,
And the lad that I love for my own:
I would not think it long,
The night I would lie at his breast,
And the daughters of spite, after that,
Might say the thing they liked best.

Love covers up hate,
If a girl have beauty at all:
On a bed that was narrow and high,
A three-month I lay by the wall:
When I remembered the lad
That I left at the brow of the hill,
I wept from dark until dark,
And my cheeks have the tear-tracks still!

And, O, young lad that I love,
I am no mark for your scorn:
All you can say of me
Is undowered I was born:
And if I've no fortune in hand,
Nor cattle or sheep of my own,
This I can say, O lad,
I am fitted to lie my lone!

From the Irish
Padraic Colum

Faith

THERE is a force that spans the range of space.
It is not only when caressing light
Of moon is on the waves that tenuous white
Binds sea and moon with threads too thin to trace.
What is this tension that commands the race
Of tides, in rhythm stretching lax or tight,
With no regard for turning day or night
Nor sensing of the distance of a place?
No one can know. But even the farthest star
By these fine measurements seems near to me,
And time and space are legends men have told;
And I could live with love that had gone far
And feel him close who touched eternity,
Remembering the way these are controlled.

Carolyn Hall

Carnival

A DRAGON-FLY, slender as a lady
Gowned for dancing in her shimmering black,
Gleams with sunlight, then where reeds are shady,
Lifts a jeweled fan and shrugs her back.

Merrily the distant music crashes
Where the summer carnival is on,—
Out across the shining floor she dashes,
Pauses for an instant, and is gone.

Prescott Hoard

Dream

BEHIND the balustrades of ebony
We leaned and wondered at the silver air
Heavy and luminous as waters where
They drag upon a cliff into a sea. . . .

The trellises were gold and mists that clung
In strands like honey poured upon the flowers,
Twining their trumpets into sheaves and showers
And swooning downward from the laden rung.

Dark and gigantic trees swung to and fro,
Echoing music that a river made,
Flooding unseen into a smothered glade,
Turgid and turbulent and deep and slow.

And from the great fans of the shadowed trees
Hung clusters of rich fruit, unreally bright,
Burdening us who looked and saw their light
Blazingly rooted to such fantasies. . . .

The air swam and our pulses kept the sound
Of hammers beating on a boundless door;
And stars shook downward from the rhythm's core
And lay like buttercups upon the ground. . . .

George O'Neil

To a Woman

SOMETIMES I think that you were born mature;
That every experience must find
In you its mirror and its mate, designed
For fertile union: you are firm, secure
Within your acre. The ephemeral lure
Of adolesence never led you blind,
Or stuffed its moon lit lyrics in your mind:
And you have grown with growth that will endure.

But I came from the wind's womb and I go,
Much like my mother, unsubstantially.
I furbish stars or brush the muddy pools
Or hold light dalliance with the apple tree.
It is ordained that I shall never grow,
But only be the happiest of fools.

Kenneth Slade Alling

To One Playing Shubert

YOUR music moves me ever to far ends;
For all we sit here in these four, close walls,
What dark adventurings the bass portends,
To what pale loves the pleading treble calls!
Ah, never pilgrim wandering for a shrine,
And never lover with a golden name,
Went lonelier journeys for warm lights . . . and wine,
And lips . . . in cities that are wan with fame.

A queen's white shoulder, curving like the moon,
Out of the purple of an old romance,
Starts glittering spears for that disastrous boon,
Where now the bass comes in, a shattered lance,
And now the final, piteous treble falls,
Like leaves in autumn on those broken walls.

David Morton

The Measure ~ *A Journal of Poetry*

Published monthly by the Editors at 449 West 22nd St., N. Y.

Edited by Maxwell Anderson, Padraic Colum, Carolyn Hall, Frank Ernest Hill, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, Winifred Welles. From these nine an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly by the board.
Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, Joseph Auslander, Robert Hillyer and David Morton.

ACTING EDITOR: WINIFRED WELLES
ASSISTANT EDITOR: LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

Prizes and the Long Poem

IT is encouraging to note the increasing number of prizes which are being offered for poetry in all parts of the country. The most conspicuous this year was the new one thousand dollar Pulitzer prize for the best volume of verse published by an American during the past year. This is a new departure for the Pulitzer prizes, and one which goes far to show the growth of serious interest in the value of good poetry.

Perhaps one of the most important features of some of the smaller prizes is their special effort towards stimulating poets to produce single poems of a greater length than the usual magazine—or even those devoted exclusively to the publication of poetry—can consider printing many times a year. For instance, the annual *Blindman Prize* of two hundred and fifty dollars, offered by Mr. W. Van Whitall through the Poetry Society of South Carolina, mentions that "special consideration will be given to sustained poems of length." And in spite of the fact that the mind of the modern poet veers cautiously away from anything like bulk, there is, after all, as much to fear from perfected trivialities and brittle cleverness as from sentimental narration or ponderous moral earnestness. And here with this particular prize at least, is the chance to receive recognition for a work of greater significance than is possible even for the most painstaking or dexterous to pack within the confines of shorter forms, or to have published in the usual restricted ways.

Winifred Welles

Word-Craft

Priapus and the Pool, by Conrad Aiken. Dunster House: Cambridge.

CONRAD AIKEN has gone more deliberately to work to make himself a poet than anybody else who has been published in the United States, not even excepting Poe. When Poe explained frankly how he obtained certain effects, doubtless recollecting with an effort as much as he could of the conscious operation of his intellectual machinery, he met frank doubt and horror—doubt of his sincerity and horror at his heresy. Poetic composition was at that time and for long after looked upon as a mystic rite, attended by visions and voices in the air.

In truth, when a man writes verse he sits with a pen in his hand putting words on paper, and his mental attitude is conditioned by that posture. His product is good or bad according to the wealth of his musical and verbal ideas, his craftsmanship with words, and the unity and charm of his interior furnishing. There may be more to it than that, but whatever it is is not inspiration, is not an inexplicable gift. It is a skein of things—a race and an age knotted into a person who finds pleasure in concords and dissonances of symbolic sounds.

As Edgar Poe was aware of this, so is Conrad Aiken. Being rich in the required associations and taking pleasure in recording them Mr. Aiken is a poet. Being scientifically curious he delights in watching himself at work, in dissecting his own mechanism and that of others. This peculiarity did not injure Poe; it seems rather to have made him a stern critic of himself, discarding every lead and every line not up to a certain level. Because he knew what he wanted when he was writing poetry he knew what he had when he had finished. Mr. Aiken's detachment has had an opposite effect. He has written much and printed much. Part of what he has printed is of such quality, in my opinion, as to give him first rank among poets now writing English. Some is not good at all and some is only passable. I suspect Mr. Aiken of turning himself on during fixed hours, turning himself off again when the lines begin to lag, and giving the whole product to his publishers.

Priapus and the Pool, for example, is not so good as *Punch, The House of Dust,* or *Nocturne of Remembered Spring.* It is made up, unless I err, of end-products. The title poem is excellent, the rest have his distinctive flavor, but they would not be missed if—here I pause, having read over two or three again. No; they are mostly worth saving.

Maxwell Anderson

A Poet for the Few

The Veil, by Walter de la Mare. Henry Holt and Co., New York.

PADRAIC COLUM said recently that the essence of true poetry was in "the rare and the lonely." No two words could better describe the most memorable of Walter de la Mare's poems, particularly since "magic," which once served him so honorably, is now fallen into almost as great disrepute as "whimsical." Whatever may be the descriptive word of the moment, it is certain that Mr. de la Mare is the poet of a particular and a permanent spell, so particular, indeed, that I might almost say his readers, too, belonged to the rare and the lonely. For he evokes a special mood, which only the few are capable or unafraid of having evoked. You must watch for his delicate revelations with the confidence and intensity of a child watching for fairies in the moonlight, only at the same time you must remember to be old as the earth itself, and also that fairies have human shapes.

In this last collection, *The Veil* (unadvisedly, it seems to me, taking its title from one of the lightest poems in the book), there is no one achievement to compare with the eerie fascination of *The Listeners* or the exquisite *Silver* of previous collections. But there is still enough of the same breathless preoccupation with death and madness, and much of the same uncanny familiarity with invisible beauty, to repay well those who read for the love of mystery and dream.

> "Not towards Death, who, stranger, fairer
> Than any siren turns his head—"

he half warns, half tempts in a strange poem called *Not That Way*. And though often before he may have indicated his sense of unseen presences, he has seldom done so with more telling effect than in the dramatic scrap *Who?* with its wild echo of mockery at the end. The two fantasies, which, to me, contained more than the merely decorative appeal, were *The Unfinished Dream* and *The Old Angler,* the last, particularly, with its descriptions of the Naiad—

> "'Gainst the cold water pressed
>
> Her lean, webbed hands. She floated there,
> Light as a scentless petalled flower,
> Water-drops dewing from her hair
> In tinkling beadlike shower."

Winifred Welles

Delicate Soil

Lute and Furrow, by Olive Tilford Dargan. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

IN an earlier book, *The Cycle's Rim,* a memorial sonnet-sequence for her husband, Mrs. Dargan spoke thus of herself:

> Dumb peasant, she gives thanks
> For any rough-spun web to dress her dream.

But in that book she was not peasant enough: there was too much of thin, attenuated filigree; too much dream, too little dress. The new book is at once more sturdy and more subtle. She has found, in some of these poems, a way of speaking which is her own, a web of the very right consistency. It is a pity that those best poems could not have been published alone, or have been held until there were others of their kind. Mrs. Dargan would seem to have been ill-advised by her publishers in putting out a so much more uneven, although a so much better, book than her other.

It is, in fact, the kind of book which makes one impatient with publishers, especially big publishers, who feel that one or two minor, rather "pretty," poetry books are a good thing to have on their lists along with their one or two better-established "names." It isn't that they are always anxious to get good poetry before people, is it, or that they want to let good poets have their say? Isn't it rather that they want a "well-balanced" list, a little salad along with the stew? Surely there are better things than her publishers realize, in this book; and also very much worse things—as, for instance, all those which are punctured with propaganda.

This book is truer to the earth, the North Carolina farm-earth, than was the other to the sea; the title is exactly descriptive of its delicately soil-like quality. But the best poem in it is not of the earth; it is an elegy for a young girl which, in spite of the curiously truncated cadences which are Mrs. Dargan's habit, at least suggests the indefinableness of perfection. It is too long to quote: this is just the variable refrain:

> Words, words! So soft that they may fall on pain
> And make it less! Softer than leaves
> Tapping a forest sleeper; while the heart
> Is like a swollen glacier crowding earth.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

Contributors

Anna Wickham is an English poet, whose work is well-known both in this country and England.

Prescott Hoard is a civil engineer who lives and works in New York City.

The others are names which have often appeared before in this and other publications.

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

ACTIVE EDITORIAL BOARD

Maxwell Anderson
Padraic Colum
Carolyn Hall
Louise Townsend Nicholl
Frank Ernest Hill
George O'Neil
Pitts Sanborn
Genevieve Taggard
Winifred Welles

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Hervey Allen, Joseph Auslander, Robert Hillyer and David Morton

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY

THE EDITORS

at

449 West 22nd Street, New York City

Subscription $2.50 a year *Single copies 25 cents*

WHERE THE MEASURE *IS ON SALE*

Brentano's .....Fifth Avenue and 27th Street, New York City
Frank Shay's Bookshop.....4 Christopher Street, New York City
The Washington Square Bookshop.....27 West 8th Street, New York City
The Sunwise Turn, Inc.....51 East 44th Street, New York City
Liberty Tower Bookshop.....Liberty and Nassau Streets, New York City
The Little Book Store.....51 East 60th Street, New York City

BOSTON

Smith & McCance — 2 Park Street
Old Corner Bookstore — 27 Bromfield Street
The Studio Bookshop — 198 Dartmouth Street

CLEVELAND

Richard Laukluff, Bookseller

CHICAGO

Kroch's — Fanny Butcher's Bookshop

The Walden Book Shop

DETROIT

The Clarion — 2705 Woodward Avenue

BERKELEY, CALIF.

Sather Gate Bookshop

SAN FRANCISCO

Paul Elder & Co.

MINNEAPOLIS

Mabel Ulrich's Bookstore

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Brentano's

PARIS

Shakespeare and Company,
12 rue de l'Odeon

LONDON

Hendersons:
Wholesale and Retail Agents,
66 Charing Cross Road, W. C. 2